

Union Pacific Railroad

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Administration Problems

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# Abraham Lincoln's Administrative Problems

## Union Pacific Railroad

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

## LINCOLN AND THE R. R. GAUGE.

### Railroad President Tells How Abraham Lincoln Fixed the Standard.

"To me," said Mr. C. P. Huntington, "Abraham Lincoln was the finest character of his generation. I esteem it the privilege of my life to have known him, for to know him was to believe in the divinity of human nature. You don't know, so I'll tell you, that it was left by law to President Lincoln to decide upon the gauge of the Pacific railroads. At that time—the spring or winter of 1863, I think—railroads had different gauges; the South had five feet, the north four feet eight and one-half inches; the roads from New York to St. Louis measured six feet, and the road from St. Louis to Kansas City 5½ feet. It was imperative that there should be a uniform gauge, which eventually came to pass. Now, by the consensus of expert opinion, it has been fixed at four feet, 8½ inches, though there are a few narrow-gauge roads of 3 feet.

"In order to get Central Pacific matters before congress, I spent months at Washington and stopped at Willard's. The President referred this matter of gauging to John P. Usher, secretary of the interior, who was requested to collect data and to present a report to the President.

"Before Usher made his report I called at the White House and saw the president. 'Mr. Lincoln,' I said, 'I have been dilatory, not from choice, but necessity. I now have reports of five engineers in favor of the 5-foot gauge which I desire to present to you for consideration before you give your ultimatum.

"I'll hear you next Friday at 11 o'clock a. m.," replied Lincoln.

"That was more than I expected. I telegraphed for G. T. M. Davis, formerly of Springfield, Ill., to come from New York, where he then resided, and make the argument. He was a personal friend of Lincoln's and an able man. He and I were promptly at the White House at 11 o'clock but the president did not receive us until 11:40. The cabinet met at noon, so that Davis had only time to shake hands with the president and say a few words before the officials arrived. Lincoln permitted him to proceed. This did not please Seward, who lived on the New York Central and wanted the gauge of 4 feet 8½ inches. Addressing the president in his own peculiar way, the secretary of state exclaimed, 'Mr. President, what kind of a meeting have we today?'

"A meeting of the cabinet and its friends," replied Lincoln with dignified composure. "Go on Col. Davis."

"Davis went on. At the conclusion of his argument the president addressed him thus: 'Of the merits of this case I know nothing. There are so many things of which I know nothing as to make it absolutely necessary for me to trust others. I call in men for that purpose. I depend on their judgment and I find, when too late, that their advice has been far more selfish than patriotic. Tell me truly what is the best gauge?'

"The pathos of Lincoln's appeal was sublime. The man's whole nature was unveiled. He was as true as steel to duty, sympathetic by nature as a woman. I wouldn't have lied to him for the whole Central Pac-

ific road. The decision was in favor of a 5-foot gauge, but later the uniform gauge 3½ inches less is perhaps better. I did not think so then, nor did the experts. Ah, Lincoln was a grand man."—Feb. 3, 1893.

## THE WIDTH OF TRACKS.

### A Railroad Man Tells How Abraham Lincoln Fixed the Gauge. *From Kate Field's Washington.*

"To me," said Mr. C. P. Huntington, "Abraham Lincoln was the finest character of his generation. I esteem it the privilege of my life to have known him, for to know him was to believe in the divinity of human nature. You don't know, so I'll tell you, that it was left by law to President Lincoln to decide upon the gauge of the Pacific railroads. At that time—the spring or winter of 1863, I think—railroads had different gauges; the South had five feet, the North four feet eight and a half inches; the roads from New York to St. Louis measured six feet, and the road from St. Louis to Kansas City 5½ feet. It was imperative that there should be a uniform gauge, which eventually came to pass. Now, by the consensus of expert opinion, it has been fixed at 4 feet 8½ inches, though there are a few narrow-gauge roads of 3 feet.

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# Abraham Lincoln and the Union Pacific

If one were to ask a group of American school children—and perhaps some grownups, too—who Abraham Lincoln was, and what he did, he would receive such answers as, "He was our Civil War president," "He issued the Emancipation Proclamation," "He successfully negotiated the distance from log cabin to White House," "He delivered noteworthy addresses, some of the best of which were his debates with Stephen A. Douglas," "He was an acknowledged wit and the drollest of humorists." To judge from the lack of general information on the subject, probably none of the persons addressed would say: "He authorized the building of the Union Pacific Railroad." Yet, that was a national event and had a decisive effect on the winning of the war, and later in making a mighty empire out of the Union Pacific States of America. It is appropriate that in this Lincoln's birthday number of The Union Pacific Magazine, something be said about Lincoln's connection with this wonderful property.

On July 1, 1862, President Lincoln signed the Act to build the Pacific Railroad. It was not a perfunctory procedure. He had advocated the passage of the Act and the building of the road, not only as a military necessity, but as a means of holding the Pacific Coast to the Union. There is no doubt but that the idea behind this enterprise was for a Pacific Union, which name reversed gives us the title of the railroad.

During a previous political campaign, Lincoln had said: "Whether elected or not, I am for distributing the proceeds of the sale of public lands to construct railroads."

In 1858 he visited Council Bluffs and stopped at the Pacific House. General (then Colonel) Grenville M. Dodge had just returned from making a survey for a railroad west of the Missouri River. General Dodge says: "He heard of my return from the survey and on the porch of the Pacific House he sat with me for two hours or more and drew out all the facts I had obtained in my survey and naturally my opinion as to the route for a railroad west. I thought no more of giving this at the time than that possibly I might have given away secrets that belonged to my employers in this work. In 1863 while in command of the district of Corinth, I received a dispatch from General Grant to proceed to Washington and report to the President. I soon ascertained that I was sent for a consultation in regard to the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad. He remembered the conversation with me on the porch of the Pacific House and under the law he was to determine the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad. Those who remember that time know what pressure was brought to bear on the President to name this point far north and far south of Council Bluffs. After a long conversation with me obtaining my views fully and the reasons for them, the President finally determined to make it on the western border of Iowa."

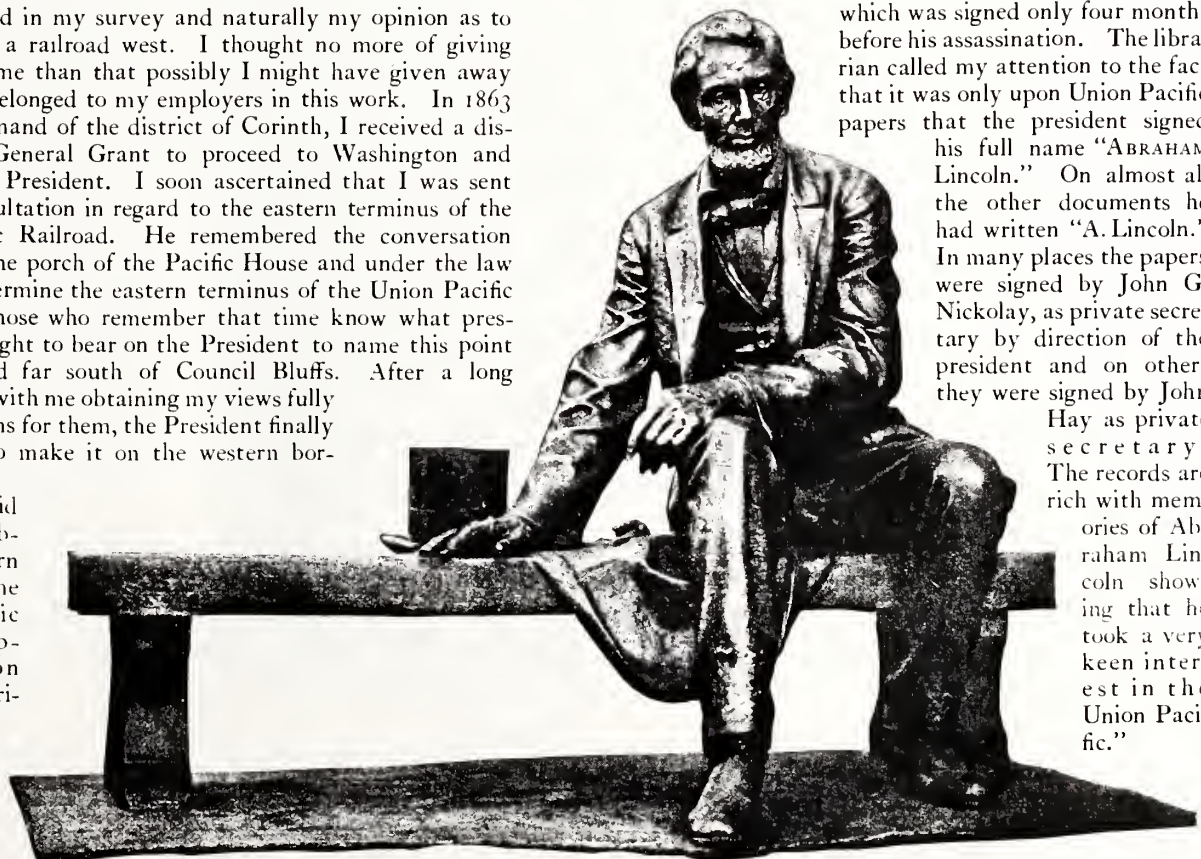
Not only did Lincoln establish the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad opposite Section 10 in the territory of Nebraska but he fixed other bound-

aries on the western end of the line which was being built eastward from the Pacific Ocean, meeting the Union Pacific at Promontory, Utah, where on May 10, 1869, the Golden Spike was driven.

By the original railroad act the President was to fix the point where the Sacramento Valley ended and the foothills of the Sierra Madre began. (From the "Wonderful Story of Building the Union Pacific.") The Chief Engineer had designated Barmores, thirty-one miles from Sacramento as the beginning of the mountains. The Supreme Court decided the foot hills commenced at thirty miles from that city. Several attempts were made to bring this to the attention of President Lincoln but the president's occupation with heavier duties connected with the war prevented the action. The time came, however, when it could not be longer delayed. It was important to the railroad company that the foot hill should begin as near as possible to Sacramento. Senator Sargent claims the credit of moving the mountain from Barmores to Arcade Creek, a distance of twenty-four miles. He relates the affair as follows: Lincoln was engaged with a map when the senator substituted another and demonstrated by it and the statement of some geologist that the black soil of the valley and the red soil of the hills unite at Arcade. The president relied on the statements given by him and decided accordingly. "Here you see," said the senator, "my pertinacity and Abraham's faith removed mountains."

Mr. L. O. Leonard, the historian of the Union Pacific System, who has just been going over the records of the Department of the Interior in Washington, says:

"Abraham Lincoln's name is intimately associated with the early history of the Union Pacific. I have found many papers signed by Abraham Lincoln, in fact I found one signature of his on one Union Pacific document, which was signed only four months before his assassination. The librarian called my attention to the fact that it was only upon Union Pacific papers that the president signed his full name 'ABRAHAM Lincoln.' On almost all the other documents he had written 'A. Lincoln.' In many places the papers were signed by John G. Nickolay, as private secretary by direction of the president and on others they were signed by John Hay as private secretary. The records are rich with memories of Abraham Lincoln showing that he took a very keen interest in the Union Pacific."



Seated Lincoln, Newark, N. J.

By GUTZON BORGLUM, Sculptor

# Road Pays Tribute To Lincoln as Man Who Gave It Start

## Union Pacific Takes Over New Speed Train on His Anniversary

Today, 72 years after President Lincoln made a scratch of his pen establishing the Pacific Railroad Act, thus binding California to the East, the Union Pacific Railroad "took delivery" of its new three-car streamline train upon Lincoln's birthday, as a special tribute to the man whose pen made the road.

In the Pullman yards in Chicago stands the Union Pacific's yellow and brown streamline train which is as certainly bound to affect the transportation pattern in the United States as the building of that road itself affected the history of the country.

According to Mr. W. A. Harriman, chairman of the board of the Union Pacific, the results of the trials to which this train will be subjected before it is placed on regular runs will be made available to other American railroads and he predicted a rush by other American railroads to streamline equipment if these results justify the predictions which his road has made for the train. He spoke today over the WJZ network of the National Broadcasting Company from Chicago.

Mr. Harriman revealed that three other trains are building for the Union Pacific, one similar to the initial train, and two nine-car trains, the latter to have air-conditioning throughout, sleeping cars, to be powered by a 1500 horsepower Diesel engine and to be employed on trans-continental runs. On these runs from Chicago to the west coast he estimated a 24-hour cut in schedules, bringing the time down to approximately 32 hours.

The economy in weight which these new streamline trains have secured by fabricating them of light, strong alloy metals has been further carried out in the equipment of the new train, a radio announcer

pointed out also as he made an inspection of the train for his listening audience. Crockery, for instance, an inconsiderable weight, has been reduced to three-quarters of its weight by substituting beetle ware. Passengers in the buffet car, it was pointed out, would remain seated as a waiter brought them their meals on a portable steam table also fabricated of light metals.

*Union Pacific Railroad*

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Mr. Ticket Agent: Will you please pass this on to your assistants.

# UNION PACIFIC BULLETIN



PASSENGER TRAFFIC DEPARTMENT

FEBRUARY 1934

OMAHA, NEBRASKA

NUMBER 245



## February the 12th Marks 125th Birthday Anniversary of Abraham Lincoln

### Faith of President Lincoln Yielded a Far-reaching Influence in the Building of the Union Pacific Railroad

This year, commemorating the 125th birthday of Abraham Lincoln, a brief review of the part he played in the founding of the Union Pacific, can be featured among the worthy causes championed by the 16th President of our country. The "Pacific Railroad," as a national necessity in joining the eastern and central states more closely with the frontier territories and California, gradually grew over a period of 30 years, from a vague vision into national prominence.

Mr. Lincoln early caught the significance of the part to be played by quick transportation from seaboard to seaboard. In 1859 he traveled to Council Bluffs to interview Grenville M. Dodge, who had surveyed much of the territory through which the Union Pacific later was built, for the purpose of gaining first hand information upon the feasibility of the project. In the spring of 1863 he called General Dodge to him in Washington for further information. The President had, the preceding July, signed "the Act of 1862" which gave official birth to the Union Pacific Railroad.

The history of the founding and building of the Union Pacific is full of incidents in which President Lincoln figured. Not the least of these is found in his personal request, made in 1865, upon the Honorable Oakes Ames, member of Congress from Massachusetts, to come to the financial aid of the Union Pacific. His words, as preserved in history, were: "Ames, take hold of this; and if the subsidies provided are not enough to build the road, ask double and you shall have it. The road must be built, and you are the only man to do it; and you take hold of it yourself. By building the road you will become the remembered man of your generation." And Oakes Ames did "take hold of it," for he together with his brother Oliver, invested \$1,000,000 in the undertaking and was instrumental in interesting \$1,500,000 of eastern capital, as well. This personal intercession by President Lincoln was the salvation of the Union Pacific project and figures among his greatest historical acts.



#### Lincoln's Decision

There may be general knowledge that the standard gauge of the American railways is four feet, eight and one-half inches, but much less concerning the manner in which that width of split inches came about.

With an expanding transportation system, the necessity for a standard track gauge became obvious. There must necessarily be an interchange of equipment between the fast multiplying number of lines, and of course this could not be accomplished in the absence of such a standard. At that period, the two lines of greatest length had, in one instance, a gauge of four feet nine inches, and in the other four feet eight inches. Their negotiations as to this difference resulted in a deadlock; each naturally wished to retain its own gauge, and so obviate the necessity for moving all its rails, and could muster an array of arguments for its stand.

Finally the matter was presented to Abraham Lincoln, then President, who settled the controversy by saying:

"Gentlemen, we will split the difference; we will set the standard gauge at four feet, eight and one-half inches."

—Christian Science Monitor.

*Pullman Car responsible*



February 9, 1949

# THE **FOXBORO** RECORDER

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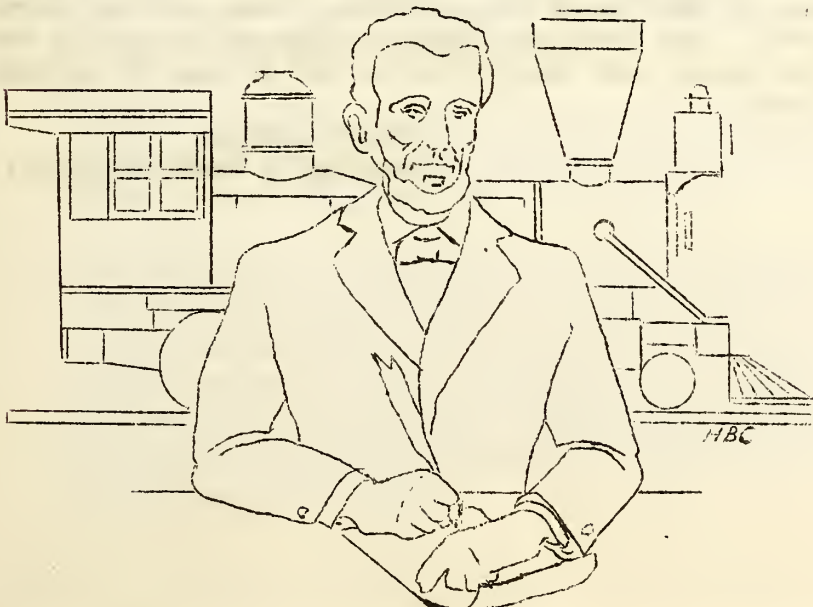
## HOW LINCOLN ESTABLISHED THE STANDARD RAILROAD GAUGE

Experts might argue endlessly as to which was the most important engineering achievement associated with the life-history of Abraham Lincoln. The 19th Century was a period of great development and progress, in science and industrial mechanization. Such inventions as the sewing machine, the reaper, the cotton gin, and the electric telegraph were so revolutionary in their influence that they have overshadowed hundreds of other patented devices, important in their respective uses but less readily remembered.

Abraham Lincoln's life-span covered the 56 years from February 12, 1809 to April 15, 1865. Within the period of his Presidency, from March 4, 1861 until his death, occurred the entire Civil War which, considered for the moment from a purely technical viewpoint, was historic for its many engineering innovations. The battle of the Monitor and the Merrimac was the engagement of two of the first armor-clad war vessels ever built. Prof. T. S. C. Lowe, with his cumbersome gas-filled observation balloon, became the first military aeronaut in American history. Both in the North and the South, most soldiers were equipped with muzzle-loading weapons, but breech-loaders of many different makes were issued, in increasing proportion, as the war progressed. Repeating rifles made their first appearance; and in 1862 came the first machine gun, known as the Gatling gun.

Meanwhile, in the field of transportation significant history was being made. In 1863 came the first Pullman Palace Car; and on August 28, 1864, the first railway postal car went into service. Coal-burning locomotives were replacing the less efficient wood-burners. But more important than any of these events was the authorization for construction of a railroad to the Pacific Coast. The importance of linking California with the Union was recognized; but apart from this, Lincoln had a

long-standing interest in the plans for such a railroad. He was to become more intimately involved in the fulfillment of those plans than he could ever have imagined!



The platform adopted by the Republican convention which nominated Lincoln, in Chicago, in May, 1860, had favored a railroad to the West Coast, and in 1861 efforts were made to get the necessary legislation through Congress, but the outbreak of the war hindered these attempts. However, on July 1, 1862, the President signed an Act which chartered The Union

Pacific Railroad Company and which was designed "to aid in the construction of a railroad and telegraph line from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean, and to secure to the Government the use of same for postal, military and other purposes." The same Act specifically delegated to the President a long and varied list of responsibilities: to appoint directors and commissioners; to fix "the point of commencement in the Territory of Nebraska" (which became Omaha); to decide which were the most difficult 300 miles of construction (since their cost would provide a basis for determining the amount of bonds issued); and there were others, including the duty of establishing the uniform width of track, for the entire line. The Act also authorized the Central Pacific Railroad of California to engage in similar construction and connect with the Union Pacific at the California border, or some point further east.

The building of this railroad across the Great West is one of the dramatic chapters in our Nation's history. Its climax was the driving of the golden spike which linked the two sections, at Promontory Point, Utah, on May 10, 1869. For countless reasons, the story is an engineering classic.

At that time, in American railroading, individual companies laid their tracks with whatever width they pleased, or whatever seemed most suitable to the conditions. The principal roads of the East were fairly well standardized on 4 ft. 8 1/2 in., which was the English standard. The Erie was an exception, with a gauge of 6 ft. (which was maintained until 1878). Throughout the South the 5-ft. gauge was quite general - which proved to be of great advantage in the transporting of troops and military supplies.

For some reason the promoters of the Central Pacific Railroad favored the 5-ft. gauge. There surely was more influence in behalf of the narrower width, and Lincoln himself was believed to favor it; yet, for some mysterious reason the President signed, on January 21, 1863, an Act establishing "Five (5) feet" ... as "the uniform width of the track of said Railroad and all its branches":

The proponents of the narrower measure immediately went into action, with the result that no later than March 2nd a Bill was passed which declared "That the gauge of the Pacific Railroad and its branches throughout their whole extent, from the Pacific Coast to the Missouri River, shall be, and hereby is, established at four feet, eight and one-half inches."

President Lincoln signed the Bill on the following day, apparently with no reluctance; and thus, involuntarily, set the gauge which is standard for all the rail lines - about 220,000 miles - in the United States today. These are the facts, for which no explanation is offered. How President Lincoln happened to specify the unfavored 5-ft. gauge in the first place, and exactly how or why he came to reverse that decision, nobody seems to know.

(Robert Barton)  
(Drawing by Harry B. Chase)



## Why the Republican Party Elected Lincoln

[LewRockwell.com](http://LewRockwell.com) ^ | October 1, 2003 | Thomas DiLorenzo

Posted on 10/01/2003 7:48 AM PDT by [Aurelius](#)

It is occasionally possible to see through the fog of mysticism, superstition, lies, and the romantic, happy-faced, floating butterfly vision of Abraham Lincoln that has been created by American court historians over the past century. One place to begin is the gem of a book by Pulitzer prize-winning Lincoln biographer David Donald entitled *Lincoln Reconsidered*. In a particularly important passage Donald quotes Senator John Sherman of Ohio, the brother of General William Tecumseh Sherman and Republican Party powerhouse from the 1860s to the 1890s who was chairman of the U.S Senate Finance Committee during the Lincoln administration, on why the Republican Party nominated and elected Abraham Lincoln.

"Those who elected Mr. Lincoln expect him . . . to secure to free labor its just right to the Territories of the United States; to protect . . . by wise revenue laws, the labor of our people; to secure the public lands to actual settlers . . . ; to develop the internal resources of the country by opening new means of communication between the Atlantic and Pacific."

Donald then claims to translate this statement "from the politician's idiom" into plain English. Lincoln and the Republican Party "intended to enact a high protective tariff that mothered monopoly, to pass a homestead law that invited speculators to loot the public domain, and to subsidize a transcontinental railroad that afforded infinite opportunities for jobbery."

This is what is so refreshing about David Donald, the best and most honest of all the mainstream "Lincoln scholars." He understood that "wise revenue laws" meant a 47 percent tariff on imports that would plunder the Southern states especially severely; he understood that "free labor" meant white labor, and protecting the white race's "just right to the territories" meant disallowing labor market competition from either slaves or free blacks. At the time, the small number of free blacks in the North had no real citizenship rights and some states, like Lincoln's Illinois, had amended their constitutions to make it illegal for blacks to move into the state.

Donald also understood that "developing the internal resources of the country" was a euphemism for the colossal corruption that would inevitably accompany massive federally-funded subsidies to railroad corporations.

The financial powers behind the Republican Party in 1860 were the Northern railroad barons, Northern manufacturers who wanted protectionist tariffs to protect them from competition, and Northern bankers and investors like Jay Cooke who wanted to use their political connections to make a killing financing a transcontinental railroad (among other schemes, such as central banking). They decided at the Chicago Republican National Convention of 1860 that Abraham Lincoln was the perfect political front man for their corrupt, mercantilist agenda.



## **The Great Railroad Lobbyist**

From the time he entered politics in 1832, Abraham Lincoln aspired to such a position. That is why he became a Whig, the party of the moneyed elite. Lincoln was one of the most money- and power-hungry politicians in American history. (Indeed, this would seem to be a prerequisite for anyone who is capable of being elected president).

As soon as he entered the Illinois legislature he led his local delegation in a successful Whig Party effort to appropriate some \$12 million in taxpayer subsidies for railroad and canal-building corporations. In his landmark book, *Lincoln and the Railroads*, first published in 1927 and reprinted in 1981 by Arno Press, John W. Starr, Jr. noted how one of Lincoln's colleagues in the legislature said "He seemed to be a born politician. We followed his lead . . ." And they followed Lincoln down a road that would nearly bankrupt the state of Illinois. The \$12 million was squandered: Almost no projects were completed with it; much of the money was stolen; and the taxpayers of Illinois were put deep into debt for years to come.

Lincoln's "internal improvements" fiasco in Illinois promised to build "a railroad from Galena in the extreme northwestern part of the state." Above St. Louis, in Alton, "three [rail]roads were to radiate"; "There was also a road to run from Quincy . . . through Springfield"; another one "from Warsaw . . . to Peoria"; and yet another "from Pekin . . . to Bloomington" (Starr, pp. 25-26). The first road mentioned was to become the Illinois Central, which would later employ Lincoln for more than a decade as one its top lawyers.

Lincoln and the Whigs saw to it that "the Assembly also voted wildly and injudiciously in the matter of banking legislation," urging the legislature to print paper money to help finance what his personal secretaries, Nicolay and Hay, would later say was "a disaster to the state." Lincoln's law partner, William Herndon, described the whole debacle as "that sanguine epidemic of financial and industrial quackery which devastated the entire community" (p. 28). The whole scheme was eventually abandoned, and taxes were raised sharply on the hapless Illinois taxpayers to pay off the debt.

The 1837 internal improvements debacle in Illinois may have been a disaster for the public, but it helped catapult a young Abraham Lincoln into position as one of the top – if not the top – lawyer/lobbyists in the country for the railroad corporations.

By 1860 the Illinois Central Railroad was one of the largest corporations in the world. In a company history, J. G. Drennan noted that "Mr. Lincoln was continuously one of the attorneys for the Illinois Central Railroad Company from its organization [in 1849] until he was elected President" (Starr, p. 58). He was called on by the company's general counsel to litigate dozens of cases. He was such a railroad industry "insider" that he often rode in private cars and carried a free railroad pass, courtesy of the Illinois Central.

Lincoln successfully defended the Illinois Central against McLean County, Illinois, which wanted to tax the corporation, for which he was paid \$5,000, an incredible sum for a single tax case in the 1850s. The man who paid him the fee was George B. McClellan,

the vice president of the Illinois Central who in 1862 would become the commanding general of the Army of the Potomac and, later, Lincoln's opponent in the 1864 election. Starr explains the dishonest ruse that was apparently used by Lincoln and McClellan to trick the Illinois Central's New York City-based board of directors to go along with such an unprecedented fee to a "country lawyer" from Illinois.

McClellan would formally refuse to pay such a large fee, making his directors happy. Then Lincoln would sue the Illinois Central for the fee. But when Lincoln went to court over the fee (armed with depositions from other Illinois lawyers that such astronomical fees were perfectly appropriate!) no lawyers for the company showed up and he won by default. Proof that this was all a ruse lies in the fact that "Lincoln . . . continued to handle [the Illinois Central's] litigation afterwards, the same as he had done before" (p. 79).

By the late 1850s, writes Starr, it was widely known that "Lincoln's close relations with powerful industrial interests" are "always potent and present in political counsels" (p. 67). In today's language, he was the equivalent of a powerful, rich and politically influential "K Street lobbyist." He often traveled "with a party of officials of the Illinois Central company. He rode in a private car, on his own pass furnished him in his capacity as attorney for the company." This "greatly impressed some of the young Republican leaders . . ." This was the real Lincoln, and it is diametrically opposed to the image of the modest, backwoods "rail splitter" that the court historians have created.

In a masterpiece of understatement, Starr comments that "Lincoln's rise [in politics] was coincident with that of the railroads" (p. 80). In addition to working for the Illinois Central, Lincoln also represented the Chicago and Alton, Ohio and Mississippi, and Rock Island Railroad corporations. As soon as the Chicago and Mississippi Railroad was built, he was appointed as the local attorney for that company as well. By 1860 Lincoln was the most prominent attorney/lobbyist the railroad industry had. He was so prominent that the New York financier Erastus Corning offered him the job of general counsel of the New York Central Railroad at a salary of \$10,000 a year, an incredible sum at the time. Lincoln turned down the offer after agonizing over it.

Lincoln also used his status as one of the top political insiders within the railroad industry to engage in some very lucrative real estate investments. On one of his trips in a private rail car accompanied by an entourage of Illinois Central executives Lincoln "decided to go to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where he had some real estate investments" (p. 152). "Shortly before his trip to Council Bluffs," writes Starr, "Abraham Lincoln had purchased several town lots from his fellow railroad attorney, Norman B. Judd, who had acquired them from the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad. Council Bluffs at this time was a frontier town, containing about fifteen hundred people" (p. 195). To this day, this land in Council Bluffs, Iowa is known as "Lincoln's Hill."

Why invest in real estate in Council Bluffs, Iowa, of all places? Why not Chicago or even Springfield, the state capital? Because Lincoln the political insider knew that there was a very high likelihood that 1) the federal government would eventually subsidize a transcontinental railroad; and 2) the starting point for that railroad could well be in the

vicinity of Council Bluffs. If so, the value of his real estate holdings would be wildly inflated and he would make a killing.

Indeed, the 1860 Republican Party Platform contained a sixteenth plank that read: "That a railroad to the Pacific Ocean is imperatively demanded by the interests of the whole country; the Federal Government ought to render immediate and efficient aid in its construction . . ." As the party's nominee, Lincoln pledged his wholehearted support of this plank. In the interests of "the whole country," of course.

When he became president legislation was immediately proposed, in a special legislative session called by Lincoln in July of 1861, to create the taxpayer-subsidized Union Pacific Railroad. "There was no firmer friend of the Union Pacific bill than the President himself," writes Starr. (In contrast, most mainstream "Lincoln scholars" make the preposterous assertion that he had nothing to do with such legislation). The bill was passed in 1862 and it gave the president the power to appoint all the directors and commissioners and, more importantly, "to fix the point of commencement" of the Union Pacific Railroad. And guess where Lincoln chose to fix the point of commencement of the railroad. He "fixed the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad . . . at Council Bluffs, Iowa" (p. 202). His financial gains must have dwarfed Cornell's \$10,000 salary offer. During the Grant administrations dozens of prominent people would go to federal prison for such criminal self-dealing but Lincoln, the ringleader of the whole enterprise, has up to now escaped scrutiny.

In addition to lining his own pockets with this piece of legislation, proving to his well-heeled supporters that he was indeed "one of them," the legislation was essentially the Mother of all Political Payoffs. One hundred fifty-eight of the prominent Northern bankers, industrialists, and railroad barons who had supported Lincoln's political career were appointed as "commissioners." As Dee Brown wrote in *Hear that Lonesome Whistle Blow: The Epic Story of the Transcontinental Railroads*, when Lincoln signed the bill creating the Union Pacific he "assured the fortunes of a dynasty of American families . . . Brewsters, Bushnells, Olcotts, Harkers, Harrisons, Trowbridges, Langworthys, Reids, Ogdens, Bradfords, Noyeses, Brooks, Cornells, and dozens of others . . ." (p. 49).

What does all this have to do with Lincoln's war "to save the union"? The answer is, "everything." The official reason for the war that was given by both Lincoln and the U.S. Congress was "to save the union." But Lincoln inherited no "perpetual union." The union of the founding fathers was a voluntary compact of the states. The states delegated certain powers to the central government as their agent, but retained sovereignty for themselves. Secession was considered a legitimate option by political and opinion leaders from all sections of the country in 1860, as I document quite extensively in *The Real Lincoln*.

In his First Inaugural Address Lincoln promised that he had no intention of disturbing Southern slavery, and that even if he did it would be unconstitutional to do so. In the same speech he pledged his support of a proposed constitutional amendment that had just passed the U.S. Senate two days earlier (after passing the House of Representatives) that



would have forbidden the federal government from ever interfering with Southern slavery. In other words, he was perfectly willing to see Southern slavery persist long after his own lifetime.

But on the issue of taxation he was totally uncompromising. The Republican Party was about to more than double the average tariff rate (from 15 percent to over 32 percent), and then increase it again to 47 percent. The Morrill Tariff passed the House of Representatives in the 1859 session, before Lincoln's nomination and before any serious movement toward secession. In the First Inaugural Lincoln clearly stated that it was his obligation as president to "collect the duties and imposts," but beyond that "there will be no invasion of any state." He was telling the South: "We are going to economically plunder you by doubling and tripling the tariff rate (the main source of federal revenue at the time), and if you refuse to collect the higher tariffs, as the South Carolinians did with the 1828 "Tariff of Abominations," there will be an invasion. That is, there will be mass killing, mayhem, and total war.

Why was the tariff so important – even more important than the issue of slavery in the eyes of Abraham Lincoln? Because tariff revenues comprised about 90 percent of federal revenue, and if the Southern states seceded they would no longer pay the federal tariff. All the grandiose plans of building a transcontinental railroad with taxpayer subsidies and creating a continental empire would be destroyed, and along with them the political career of Abraham Lincoln and, possibly, the Republican Party itself. The union was "saved" geographically but destroyed philosophically by the waging of total war on the civilian population of the South, a war in which nearly one half of the adult white male population was either killed or mutilated.

Three months after the war, Generals Grant, Sherman and Sheridan would commence a twenty-five year campaign of ethnic genocide against the Plains Indians to make the American West safe for the subsidized transcontinental railroads. Sherman (who was also a railroad industry-related real estate investor) explicitly stated that the purpose of eradicating the Plains Indians was to make sure that they did not stand in the way of the government-subsidized railroads.

By ignoring this true history of how a modestly successful trial lawyer from Illinois came to be the nominee of the moneyed elite that ran the Republican Party in 1860, America's court historians have railroaded the public into believing a fairy tale version of their own history. The popular notion that the Republican Party's early leaders were Selfless Humanitarians is as big a lie as has ever been told.

